

## Christmastide.

(Lillian F. Lewis, in the 'Church Evangelist'.)

Before the stars the night's gloom flies,  
The hosts hold carol in the skies,  
Deliverance comes and bondage dies—  
'Tis Christmastide!

What happy day the morn o'ersteals,  
What gracious joy the spirit feels,  
What holy hope Faith sings and seals—  
At Christmastide!

How shall the heart but leap in praise,  
The lip but voice its grateful lays,  
In welcome of this day of days—  
The Christmastide?

## An Acceptable Offering.

A SKETCH FOR CHRISTMAS TIME.

(Mrs. Harriet A. Cheever, in the 'Christian Intelligencer'.)

Mr. Grafton was bustling about with an air of being very much in earnest concerning certain things of which he was in quest. In and out of stores went the business man, making various purchases, none of which seemed in keeping with what would naturally be considered his personal wants.

At last he entered more deliberately his tailor's establishment, and after careful consultation emerged, having left an order for an expensive, luxurious overcoat, which was to be delivered at the house of Dr. Darling, the minister, two days before Christmas.

Christmas! Ah, that explains it. Mr. Grafton had of course been going about securing holiday gifts, and in each case they were to be delivered two days in advance of the day of good cheer.

Now it was not usual for Mr. Grafton thus to exert himself for the benefit and happiness of others. Not that he was either an unkind or a selfish man, but everything with him had been business, business! There had been no time for anything else; no respite, no vacations, no trips, no pleasant social ties, and no Christmas jollity.

And he had reaped his reward. There was money in the coffers, there were houses and lands, bonds and deeds, testifying to the fruitful outcome of years of unremitting devotion to one object. Yet, it was not a spirit of greed that had actuated him. No, let us do him justice. It simply seemed 'born in him' to love a business career. The effort, the excitement, the competition of a business life stimulated and attracted him, just as it does thousands of active, wideawake men.

But something had happened. Mr. Grafton had been obliged to pause in his headlong career, in his ardent chase after more and more of this world's goods. There had come an involuntary suspension of activity, a complete stand-still. A force not to be overleaped had sounded a grim 'thus far,' and then left him stranded.

Mr. Grafton had been ill, very ill. For the first time in his life he had faced the fact that it was not because of his own strength, that he had gone on unchecked from year to year, working out his will and wishes. He had vaguely known this. Now he realized it.

Some time before he was stricken down, Mr. Grafton had heard a sermon that just for the time being impressed him. He remembered that the text had been to the effect that men did not live to themselves, nor did they die to themselves, and the preacher pointed

out that it was every man's duty who could do so, to help and benefit his fellow men.

During those days of helplessness and suffering, Mr. Grafton recalled that sermon, and, feeling oppressed with a sense of unworthiness and remissness, he made an attempt at prayer, the first time he had stopped to pray for years. And he promised that if God would drive away pain, and restore him to health he would try to act up to his duty, and consider the interests and needs of others.

Somewhere about the middle of autumn, Mr. Grafton was gradually getting back to his place in the business world. He did not forget this promise made at a time of stress and weakness.

Coal was sent to the janitor of the building in which he had his office. The man's wife had been sick and it was hard for him to meet necessary expenses. Jemmy was 'loud and long' in expressions of gratitude and encomiums of praise.

The city missionary who solicited aid in sending out Thanksgiving dinners to the poor, received a cheque which called down renewed blessings on Mr. Grafton's head. The newsboy who craved promotion to becoming a bootblack, was given help toward procuring the needed 'kit' which made him fairly writhe with joy.

Moreover, Mr. Grafton had taken to constant church going, not having forgotten a stinging sense of regret that had dogged him while lying ill, at not having been truer to his early training and continuing to go regularly to his church.

But—the strange part of these proceedings was that Mr. Grafton did not experience the relief and satisfaction from a bestowal of all these benefactions that he had expected. Instead, there was a kind of inward craving that he did not at all understand. And, thinking it all over one night, he concluded it might be that he had not yet done enough to atone for the years of indifference and neglect that could surely be laid to his account.

This was why, as Christmas approached, Mr. Grafton was sending gifts broadcast, and in his zeal was actually trying to think up cases where he could send needed aid and make people happy.

Yet, after all, the man was sorely puzzled. For sitting in his comfortable library on the Christmas eve, he faced again the old heart-craving, an inward demand for—what? He was perfectly honest in saying to himself, 'I surely fail to understand what more is required of me.'

But the soul that begins seeking after light and its own best progress, is never long left in doubt as to its greatest needs. Mr. Grafton was pondering the perplexing problem of unsatisfying results in the face of sincere and conscientious efforts when the door-bell rang, and Dr. Darling, the minister, was ushered in. As he faced his generous friend, there was an expression in the pastor's eyes that made Mr. Grafton say deprecatingly:

'Now, don't! don't say one word! I've only tried to serve myself, and do myself a favor in begging you would accept what I know you have in mind.'

'Oh, you can't get out of it on any such specious pleas as that,' laughed the minister, and giving his head a knowing turn. 'Why, my dear sir, I've sometimes wondered how it really would seem to have a great coat with a fur collar to turn up around one's ears of a piercing night; it has occurred to me a few times as a pleasing fancy too distant to materialize for the dominie; but lo! I find myself the possessor of so noble a fellow in the way of an

overcoat, that I really fear it will take us some time to get thoroughly acquainted.'

Mr. Grafton listened to the minister's pleasantries with rather a sober face, and while the genial man in well-chosen words was expressing his gratitude and very sincere satisfaction at having been so generously remembered, Mr. Grafton suddenly resolved to lay his perplexities before the pastor, asking if he could suggest some further course of action.

Dr. Darling was immediately all attention, the instincts of the 'minister' leaping toward earnest desire to render any possible aid. But Mr. Grafton was a man of known business acumen, he surely could not need advice along commercial lines.

No, the next moment the good man was listening to a very outspoken state of affairs concerning another man's inner life; the struggle of a well-meaning but short-sighted man, who failed to recognize his own most vital obligations.

'My dear Mr. Grafton,' began Dr. Darling after hearing the whole story, 'you have made no mistake in kindly considering the claims of those about you, but the Lord Christ wants something more!'

'Oh, I intend to keep on giving,' said Mr. Grafton ingenuously. 'I derive decided pleasure from it; I only wonder if eventually it will not prove more satisfying.'

'Not until you give something different, a something far more precious in the Lord's sight than anything yet offered,' was the minister's uncompromising reply.

Mr. Grafton looked honestly puzzled. 'I fail to see what you mean,' he said. 'I think I'd be willing to give all there is of me to feel really at rest.'

'That is exactly what is wanted,' said Dr. Darling with a reassuring nod.

'What? All my property?'

'Oh, no, you didn't say that! You said "all there is of me;" that is just what God wants yourself! Give yourself to him, and see the joy and satisfaction that will encompass you as with a beautiful garment.'

At last Mr. Grafton understood. He grasped the pastor's hand at parting, saying he would think the matter out to the finish.

He did. And it had all become so simple! Sitting alone until midnight he resolved to do a man's whole duty to himself and to his God. Then it occurred to him that Christmas Day would be the best time in the world to make the offering to the dear Lord who had bought him. He felt his unworthiness, yet rejoiced to feel that he was precious to the dear Redeemer of men.

The next time he saw his pastor he said but a few words, but they made the good man's heart rejoice.

'I have made that other offering,' he said, 'and thanks be to our bounteous Father in Heaven, I found that it was an acceptable one.'

## Yule-Log Chips.

Yule-log chips, like yule-tide gifts, never fulfil their mission unless they give a bright and cheery glow.

Do as you 'would be,' not as you 'are,' done by.

Christmas is meaningless unless it takes us out of ourselves, and makes us think and work for others.

Individual character never shows itself more plainly than in the making of gifts.

Casting bread upon the Christmas waters, with the expectation that it will return after few, or many, days, is contemptible; and making Christmas gifts that are a bargain with one's conscience is scarcely less so.